REMARKS

Claims 7-9, 13-15, 19-21, and 25-27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Publication No. 2002/0103932 to Bilbrey et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Applicant respectfully submits that the Bilbrey et al. reference fails to disclose or suggest all of the claimed features of the present invention. More specifically, the Bilbrey et al. reference fails to disclose or suggest message-address management processing in which, *inter alia*, a server receives absence response information including an old address and a new address from a client, message address lists of message exchanging groups are reviewed for the old address and for other addresses in the same list, the domains and servers of the other members of the selected list are determined, and the absence response information is distributed to the determined servers, wherein the server that receives the absence response information from the client also performs the step of distributing the absence response information to the determined servers.

In the Advisory Action, the Examiner asserted that the claimed invention could be realized by merely combining the process described in the Bilbrey et al. reference with the name solution processing of a DNS server.

However, according to the present invention, the server which is notified of the absence response information also performs the message delivery processing (as well as name solution processing).

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For example, for the present invention, assume that server X stores a message address list L1 in which members x and y are listed, and that the message address of member x is changed. In the present invention, server X receives absence response information from the client (including the old and new addresses of member x), server X then extracts the message address list L1 that includes members x and y, obtains the addresses of the other members of the list L1 (such as the address of member y), identifies server Y as the server associated with member y from the address of member y, and then sends the absence response information of member x to Server Y. Such a procedure allows server Y to get a notice for updating another message list, such as list L2, in which member x may also be a member. Applicant respectfully submits that the Bilbrey et al. reference does not perform such a function, but instead merely updates the address lists that are collectively managed by the sponsor server 102.

Further, even assuming *arguendo* that the address lists of sponsor 102 of the Bilbrey et al. reference are equivalent to the claimed "message address list of a message exchanging group," the Bilbrey et al. reference fails to disclose or suggest a procedure in which the same server receives the absence response information from the client also performs the step of distributing the absence response information to the other servers (such as Applicant's server 1 of Figure 1).

Instead, in Bilbrey et al., the server receiving the absence response information from the client (such as network server 106 of Figure 1) is a different server than the server that distributes the absence response information to the other servers (such as the RM server

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104 of Figure 1, which as disclosed in paragraph [0047], is associated with sponsor DB 102).

The use of such different servers is necessary in Bilbrey et al. because the sponsors do not want to allow the network server access to their databases, and the network sever only allows the sponsor to receive address changes if the client has authorized that particular sponsor to receive such information. *See e.g.,* paragraphs [0047] and [0058] of Bilbrey et al. Accordingly, the RM 104 associated with the sponsor acts as an intermediary between the network server and the sponsor database. Thus, because of this separation, it would not have been obvious to have combined the sponsor and network servers. Accordingly, as all of the features of the present invention are not disclosed or suggested in the Bilbrey et al. reference, Applicant respectfully requests the withdrawal of this rejection.
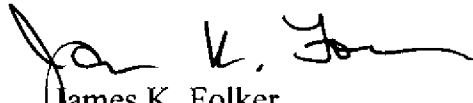
Finally, Applicant has also added new dependent Claims 28-30, which each more specifically define that the message address list of a message exchanging group is "a database of message addresses that exchange messages *with each other"* (emphasis added). In contrast, in the Bilbrey et al. reference, the Sponsor's email address list (which the Examiner appears to have equated with the claimed "message address list of a message exchanging group") is a list of email addresses that the Sponsor sends messages to, but it is not a list of email addresses that exchange messages with each other. Accordingly, for this additional reason, Applicant respectfully requests the allowance of new dependent Claims 28-30.

For all of the above reasons, Applicant requests reconsideration and allowance of the claimed invention. Should the Examiner be of the opinion that a telephone conference

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would aid in the prosecution of the application, or that outstanding issues exist, the Examiner

is invited to contact the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

GREER, BURNS & CRAIN, LTD.

By

James K. Folker
Registration No. 37,538

May 16, 2008
Suite 2500
300 South Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606
(312) 360-0080
Customer No. 24978
P:\DOCS\1122\65856\BW2931.DOC

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